



County of Los Angeles
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

713 KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION • LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012
(213) 974-1101
<http://cao.co.la.ca.us>

DAVID E. JANSSEN
Chief Administrative Officer

July 7, 2003

TO: Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, Chair
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: Leroy D. Baca, Sheriff *L. Baca*
David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer *DEJ*
P. Michael Freeman, Fire Chief *PMF*

SUBJECT: **COMMERCE TRAIN DERAILMENT - JUNE 20, 2003**

Board of Supervisors

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On June 24, 2003, your Board directed the CAO, County Counsel, Fire Chief, and Sheriff to provide by July 8, 2003, a report about the impact of the Union Pacific train derailment in the City of Commerce, with recommendations as to how to manage similar situations in the future and an explanation of when railroad agencies need to notify local jurisdictions.

Local emergency responders did not receive timely notification of the potential for a disaster from the June 20, 2003 incident in the City of Commerce prior to the derailment. The first call by the Union Pacific Railroad was made to their Management Communications Center in St. Louis, Missouri, and was then forwarded to the California State Office of Emergency Services (OES) Warning Center in Sacramento at 12:12 p.m., approximately 15 minutes after the derailment occurred. OES immediately notified its Regional Emergency Operations Center (REOC), who in-turn notified the Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management (OEM). The notification to OEM was received after the news media was already reporting from the scene of the incident.

On Friday, June 20, 2003, at 11:33 a.m., while uncoupling a large number of railroad freight cars from a locomotive, the Union Pacific Railroad experienced a "runaway" train incident in the railroad's Montclair Switching Yard. Attached is a National Transportation Safety Board update on the incident.

At 11:56 a.m., the Union Pacific Railroad decided to divert the runaway cars to the sidetrack in the City of Commerce where the main line expands to four lines and the fourth line is a "siding". Due to the speed of the train, when the freight cars were diverted onto track four they derailed into the railroad yard and the homes along the south side of the railroad tracks.

At 11:58 a.m., East Los Angeles Sheriff's Station was notified of a train derailment in the City of Commerce by 9-1-1 calls from residents in the vicinity of Ferguson Drive and Davie Avenue.

At 11:59 a.m., East Los Angeles Sheriff's Station personnel notified the Los Angeles County Fire Department via the 9-1-1 system. Notifications were also made to several Federal, State, and local agencies that immediately responded to the location of the incident.

Sheriff Department field units were dispatched to the area. Upon their arrival, they discovered that several freight cars had derailed and struck a number of residences in the immediate area of Ferguson Drive and Davie Avenue. Sheriff personnel immediately started search and rescue operations and they were quickly joined by units from the County Fire Department. County Fire made notifications to several Federal, State, and local agencies that immediately responded to the location of the incident. The response personnel from the Sheriff's and Fire Departments were very effective in their mitigation efforts and incorporating entities into unified command as the incident progressed.

The impact to the City of Commerce included two homes destroyed and two severely damaged. Four additional homes had minor/moderate damage. There were a total of 13 injured, six of whom were transported to local hospitals.

The Union Pacific Railroad is providing emergency shelter for displaced residents in local hotels mutually coordinated by the City of Commerce, Union Pacific, and the Red Cross. The overall cost of this event is still being assessed. There are also a number of issues (such as covering the transition from emergency sheltering to temporary housing, the total cost of the event, etc.) that are unclear.

Union Pacific Railroad issued a \$35,000 check to the City and has stated that they would reimburse the City of Commerce for all costs. Union Pacific Railroad also indicated that they were working with victims to restore their homes.

Currently, railroads are legally required to notify the State whenever there is the potential for a hazardous materials event caused by a railroad (copy of Public Utilities Code attached). As a preliminary step to encourage more rapid notification of local authorities, the Union Pacific Railroad was given the contact phone numbers to the Sheriff's Communication Center (SCC) and the County Fire Dispatch Center. They were advised that the SCC will be the primary point of contact for all of Los Angeles County, and will notify the appropriate agencies for immediate response.

To establish a proposed notification protocol for future incidents within the County of Los Angeles, the Sheriff's Department Emergency Operations Bureau (EOB) has assumed the lead in organizing a meeting to be held at 2:00 p.m., on July 10, 2003, at the County Emergency Operation Center (EOC). In attendance at this meeting will be: Deputy Chief

Each Supervisor
Page 3
July 7, 2003

Bray from the Union Pacific Railroad (who will fly out from Omaha, Nebraska); local representatives from the Union Pacific Railroad; representatives from other railroad companies (i.e. Burlington, Northern, Santa Fe, and Amtrak); Los Angeles County Fire Department; Los Angeles City Fire and Police Departments; Los Angeles County Police Chiefs' Association; Los Angeles Area Fire Chiefs' Association; California Highway Patrol; Railroad Police; Sheriff's Communication Center, Transit Services Bureau, Sheriff's Headquarters Bureau; California State Office of Emergency Services; County Office of Emergency Management; County Department of Public Social Services; the Red Cross; Orange County Sheriff's Department; and other mass transit agencies. Additionally, the County Office of Emergency Management will use the meeting to gain information on other issues related to the event (i.e., costs, status of providing temporary housing, etc.).

Your Board will be provided with the findings and recommendations from this meeting.

DEJ:CP
JS:jl
Attachment

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel

National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, DC 20594
June 26, 2003

UPDATE ON UNION PACIFIC RAIL ACCIDENT IN COMMERCE, CALIFORNIA

The National Transportation Safety Board today released the following factual information on the investigation into the Union Pacific rail accident, June 20, 2003, in City of Commerce, CA.

(Note: All information is preliminary and subject to change as the investigation proceeds.)

Investigators from the NTSB's regional office in Gardena, CA, arrived on scene, June 20, shortly after the accident occurred. In the subsequent days they have been examining the rail cars and equipment, the track and train route, documenting communications among Union Pacific staff, and reviewing established railroad procedures. Investigators also have been interviewing train crews and other railroad personnel involved in the accident.

Accident Summary

On June 20, 2003, at about 11:58 a.m. (PDT), 28 of 31 cars of a Union Pacific (UP) freight train derailed after running loose (without locomotives) for 28 miles. The cars became loose as they were being prepared for switching in the UP's Montclair rail yard. The derailment occurred as the runaway cars entered a siding in the City of Commerce, CA. During the course of the derailment, some of the cars and their cargo impacted nearby residences destroying two houses and damaging several others. Thirteen people suffered minor injuries and were transported to local hospitals. There were no fatalities. There was no hazardous materials release and no fire. About 150 people were evacuated from the area because of broken gas and water lines.

Initial Timeline

According to information from UP, the two-man crew for the train, a mixed freight train 2,281 feet in length, weighing 3,883 tons, came on duty 5:45 a.m. on Friday, June 20. After a short job briefing, they boarded the train, which consisted of three locomotives and 69 cars, performed an initial air brake test and departed the UP yard in Los Angeles, heading east for the Montclair rail yard in Montclair, CA.

The engineer told investigators that the train handled fine en route and that he experienced no delays. The train entered the UP's City of Industry rail yard where 38 cars were detached for switching in the nearby area. The train then departed the City of Industry yard and the crew reports that they did not experience any

problems with train handling. When the train reached the Montclair rail yard, a conductor for the yard switching crew instructed the inbound train to proceed to the east end of the yard, disconnect the locomotives and "hy-ball the brakes" (railroad vernacular for leave the brakes alone we'll take care of them).

Following those instructions, the train crew disconnected their locomotives from the rest of the cars, causing the air brakes on the cars to be automatically applied. The conductor for the yard then began bleeding air off some of the brakes on the freight cars to release the air brakes to expedite the switching operation. As the brakeman from the yard approached the middle of the train, the conductor instructed him to start there (in the middle) and bleed air from the cars eastward. Meanwhile, the yard conductor returned to assist an engineer in bringing a locomotive to the siding to connect with the cars.

The brakeman completed bleeding air from the cars and walked toward the train crew, who had placed one of their locomotives on a storage track and were returning to their remaining two locomotives. As he approached the two crewmen, they asked him if the detached cars were moving. When the yard brakeman looked back, he saw that they had begun to move and he started chasing after them. The yard conductor also noticed the cars moving and began running toward them, telling his engineer to call the dispatcher and advise that the cars were loose.

At 11:33 am, the freight cars (without locomotives) began moving downhill and within one minute passed the west end switch of the Montclair rail yard. The distance from the switch at Montclair yard to the derailment site is approximately 28 miles. The authorized freight train speed limit on this track is 70 mph, and the authorized speed limit to switch tracks at the derailment site is 15 mph.

At 11:44 am, Pomona Police called UP to report cars rolling westbound unattended. At 11:45 am, UP issued a warning to maintenance-of-way crews along the track to stand clear. At this time, the UP Corridor Manager, the Chief Dispatcher and the Assistant Dispatcher on duty report that they were evaluating options and identifying trains on tracks ahead near Los Angeles.

At 11:50 am, the Chief Dispatcher notified the Corridor Manager that there was no place to go but track 4, the track at the switch at City of Commerce where the derailment eventually occurred. At 11:54 am (four minutes before the derailment), wayside detection equipment indicated the runaway cars were traveling at 86 mph. At 11:56 am, a UP employee is reported to have told the Chief Dispatcher that there were homes at the east end of track 4, but the Corridor Manager and Chief Dispatcher said that they did not see any other option. The Assistant Dispatcher is reported to have told the Corridor Manager that he had to "decide right now" because the cars were approaching the switch. The decision was made to divert the cars at City of Commerce to track 4 and the

derailment occurred at about 11:58 am. There was no notification from the UP to any local authorities before the derailment.

Work Continues

The investigation is ongoing. Investigators are examining UP procedures and contingency plans. Interviews with UP personnel and reviews of company records are continuing. Additional work will include examining UP's handling of the emergency situation and the rail traffic in the path of the runaway cars.

The investigation is expected to continue for several weeks. Detailed factual reports are expected to be completed within three to six months, and they will be made available in a public docket. An accident investigation report will then be prepared and submitted to Safety Board Members for a determination of probable cause and consideration of possible recommendations to prevent similar accidents in the future.

NTSB Media Contact: Paul Schlamm (202) 314-6100

PUBLIC UTILITIES CODE

515

Article 7.5. Hazardous Materials Transportation by Rail
(Article 7.5 added by Stats. 1990, Ch. 1662, Sec. 11.)

7671. The Legislature finds and declares that the purpose of this article is to protect the health and safety of the public and to improve the safety of transporting hazardous materials by rail.

(Added by Stats. 1990, Ch. 1662, Sec. 11.)

7672. For purposes of this article, "hazardous material" means any of the following:

(a) A hazardous material as defined in Section 171.8 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

(b) A hazardous material defined in Section 25501 of the Health and Safety Code.

(c) Any commodity listed by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment pursuant to Section 59019 of the Health and Safety Code.

(Amended by Stats. 1991, Ch. 766, Sec. 5.)

7672.5. Any railroad corporation which is involved in an incident resulting in a release, or threatened release, of a hazardous material shall immediately report the type and extent of the release or threatened release in the manner specified in Section 25507 of the Health and Safety Code.

(Added by Stats. 1990, Ch. 1662, Sec. 11.)

7673. Each railroad corporation which transports hazardous materials in the state shall do all of the following:

(a) Provide a system map of the state to the Office of Emergency Services and to the Public Utilities Commission, showing practical groupings of mileposts on the system and showing mileposts of stations, terminals, junction points, road crossings, and the locations of natural gas and liquid pipelines in railroad rights-of-way.

(b) Annually submit to the Office of Emergency Services a copy of a publication which identifies emergency handling guidelines for the surface transportation of hazardous materials, except that if the railroad corporation is classified as a class I carrier by the Interstate Commerce Commission pursuant to Subpart A of Part 1201 of Subchapter C of Chapter X of the Code of Federal Regulations, the railroad corporation shall annually submit to the Office of Emergency Services 50 copies of this publication which the Office of Emergency Services shall make available to the Public Utilities Commission and local administering agencies and to other response agencies. These guidelines shall not be considered comprehensive instructions for the handling of any specific incident.

(c) If there is a train incident resulting in a release or an overturned railcar or an impact which threatens a release of a hazardous material, provide the emergency response agency with all of the following information:

- (1) A list of each car in the train and the order of the cars.
- (2) The contents of each car, if loaded, in the train.

Post-It® Fax Note	7671	Date	7-7-03	# of pages	1
To	SCOTT Brewer		From	GEORGE Elyon	
On	7/7/03				